

[https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/life/checking-out-the-nightlife-in-delaware-s-rocking-resort/article\\_d753fbb5-c25b-5e55-ba12-2ec879608494.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/life/checking-out-the-nightlife-in-delaware-s-rocking-resort/article_d753fbb5-c25b-5e55-ba12-2ec879608494.html)

## Checking out the nightlife in Delaware's rocking resort

By LEE PROCIDA, Staff Writer Oct 2, 2011



Patrons party at the Rusty Rudder, one of the popular nightclubs in Dewey Beach, Del.

DEWEY BEACH, Del. - I took the last bite of my Eggs Benedict with crab meat, finished my hangover-soothing Bloody Mary and tried to recall the last three wild days with my friends. I finally relented, and texted my buddy.

"Dewey wins."

It was hard for me to say. Since June, I had been constantly telling my old college roommate about the excitement of the Jersey shore party scene, doubting Delaware could compare.

But, after seeing the town's famous bars, sampling its creative cuisine and immersing myself in the carefree culture, it was obvious this seaside destination is just a whole other experience.

"Dewey really is the best thing about Delaware," said my friend Reza Shiekh, 25, of Wilmington, who I went to the University of Delaware with and who has a summer home in Dewey.

A few friends and I took a summer trip, when the beach scene was most lively, but there are also events that run through the fall, winter and spring.

"All the way from the spring to the end of October, there is always something going on here," said Vikki Walls, entertainment director for Highway One, which operates several of the town's most popular nightclubs, including the Rusty Rudder, the Bottle & Cork and the Northbeach Restaurant and Bayside Bar. "I would definitely check it out.

We all took a vacation day that Friday, and started our three-day retreat by departing Thursday evening on the Cape May-Lewes Ferry.

It was my first time on the boat, and I was surprised how much it cost. For one car, a driver and two passengers, it cost us \$104 round-trip.

But when we were sitting at a bar on the back deck of the boat, listening to a live band play Journey, drinking Dogfish Head beers and watching dolphins in the distant water beneath the setting sun, there was no question this was the only way to go.

The trip to Dewey is less than 10 miles south of the ferry terminal. The entire town is less than half a square mile, about the same size as Cape May Point and about as thin as Long Beach Island. Every inch is packed with homes, hotels, bars and restaurants. It's all within walking distance, but there's also a free trolley that will take you up and down the strip.

We stayed with friends, but there are plenty of accommodations, ranging from weeklong house rentals to family-friendly resort hotels on the oceanfront.

The best resources for finding lodging in the area are the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce ([www.beach-fun.com](http://www.beach-fun.com)) and Southern Delaware Convention & Visitors Bureau ([www.visitsoutherndelaware.com](http://www.visitsoutherndelaware.com)).

We unpacked, changed and wasted no time walking to the Rusty Rudder (open April to Halloween), a massive bar on the bay known for its Thursday night parties.

By 9 p.m., Love Seed Mama Jump - a local original and cover band that also performs in South Jersey - already was rocking out with "American Girl" by Tom Petty. The sunken outdoor dance floor was packed. We hung out all night, meeting new friends and enjoying the beautiful weather.

I immediately noticed this isn't just a party destination for twentysomethings. On any given night at most bars, the crowds range from 21 to 60, with three generations at times all hanging out at the same place.

But here is where I also have to note the obvious flaw of nightlife in Delaware - the bars close at 1 a.m., a shock compared to 2 and 3 a.m. at most shore points in New Jersey.

On the bright side, we were home and passed out early enough to get an early start on Friday morning.

For breakfast, we hit up Gary's Dewey Beach Grill (open daily during summer, limited schedule year-round), a staple in town with a variety of flavorful but healthy foods.

I got their specialty, the turkey burger on whole wheat, and washed it down with a Dogfish Head. It wasn't quite noon yet, but it's a Delaware-brewed beer, and I was just doing as the Delawarians do.

After relaxing for a few hours, we went to The Lighthouse (open year-round), another famous Dewey bar right on Dickinson Street and the bay.

The trademark drink there, and at a number of places in town, is the Orange Crush, with equal parts vodka, triple sec and fresh squeezed orange juice. We used them to wash down the make-your-own \$1 tacos we had for the "Taco Toss" happy-hour special the restaurant hosts.

That night we went to Northbeach Restaurant and Bayside Bar on McKinley Street (open May to Labor Day). The entrance leads into an outdoor tiki bar, connected to an indoor area with a stage and dancefloor, in between another outdoor area by the water.

Go Go Gadget, an increasingly popular cover band that plays at the Jersey shore as well, simply rocked the place. In between sets, we relaxed with beers outside, passing them up to a bartender sitting in a lifeguard stand outfitted with taps connected to the kegs below him.

Up until Saturday afternoon, I was having a great time, and it was a nice change of pace, but I wasn't yet blown away enough to put Dewey above my favorite South Jersey shore towns.

Then came "Jam Session."

The Bottle & Cork (open May to mid-September), a massive club with indoor and outdoor areas directly on Route 1, is packed to capacity every Saturday afternoon as three live cover bands play from 4 p.m. to 1 a.m. The venue celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, and it's the one place in Dewey where seemingly everyone goes all at once.

The bar also operates as a concert hall, bringing in nationally renowned acts ranging from Grace Potter & The Nocturnals to Lil' Kim to George Clinton. We missed Citizen Cope by a week.

Afterward, we had to stop and get crab pretzels at Woody's East Coast Bar and Grille (open daily during summer, limited schedule year round).

The Dewey delicacy is a soft pretzel covered in cheese and crab, and I couldn't understand why I hadn't had one in South Jersey before. I added a heap of Old Bay to get the full experience.

The next morning, we woke up and went to the Starboard (open spring to fall, and special weekends year-round), yet another famous bar there, with its make-your-own Bloody Mary bar.

I mixed mine while an Elvis impersonator sang "Viva Las Vegas," a weekly ritual at the venue. I used the spicy concoction to wash down my Eggs Delmarva - poached eggs nestled on top of lump crabmeat atop English muffins, smothered in hollandaise sauce and Old Bay.

We watched the Phillies game that afternoon before heading back to the ferry in the evening, exhausted.

A couple weeks later, my friends from Delaware visited me in Sea Isle City to see what they were missing at the Jersey shore.

But that's a whole other story.

Contact Lee Procida:

609-457-8707

**LProcida@pressofac.com**

**Travel time:** 70 minutes one-way on the Cape May Lewes Ferry, and a 9-mile drive southeast on the coastal highway to the heart of Dewey Beach, which takes about 20 minutes depending on traffic. Best to reserve a spot on the ferry at **[www.cmlf.com](http://www.cmlf.com)**.

**Where to stay:** To get phone numbers, websites and addresses for hotels, motels and home rentals, check out the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce (**[www.beachfun.com](http://www.beachfun.com)**) and Southern Delaware Convention & Visitors Bureau (**[www.visitsoutherndelaware.com](http://www.visitsoutherndelaware.com)**).

**What else to do:** While Dewey has a reputation as a party town, there also is a long list of family-oriented places to go and things to see. Either in the city or just nearby are movies and bonfires on the beaches, playgrounds and parks, watersports and waterparks, and a variety of opportunities for young and old together. The Jolly Trolley runs continuous trolley service offers between Dewey and neighboring Rehoboth through the summer and surrounding weeks, and charters are available year-round at **[www.jolleytrolley.com](http://www.jolleytrolley.com)**.

The Rusty Rudder

113 Dickinson St.

302-227-3888

Open April to Halloween

### **Gary's Dewey Beach Grill**

2000 Highway One

302-226-4899

Open daily during summer, limited schedule year-round

### **The Lighthouse**

124 Dickinson St.

302-227-4333

Open year-round

### **Northbeach Restaurant and Bayside Bar**

125 McKinley St.

302-226-8673

Open May to Labor Day

### **Bottle & Cork**

1807 Highway One

302-227-7272

Open May to mid-September

### **Woody's East Coast Bar and Grille**

1904 Highway One

302-260-9945

Open daily during summer, limited schedule year-round

### **The Starboard**

2009 Highway One

302-227-4600

Open spring to fall, and special weekends year-round

**When to go:** Obviously, summer is the best time to get the full of experience of relaxing on the beach during the day and partying at the variety of indoor and outdoor bars and clubs on warm nights. However, there are plenty of events going on during the shoulder seasons and year-round on special occasions. Get info on opening and closing dates for certain venues, information about festivals and details on how to get tickets for shows at [www.deweybeachlife.com](http://www.deweybeachlife.com).

**Who you'll see:** There really is no stereotypical age in the city's bars. Partygoers range in age from 21 to 85, with newcomers dancing and drinking right next to longtime Dewey veterans. The atmosphere just about anywhere is laid back and carefree, so everyone gets along for the most part.

**What else to do:** While Dewey has a reputation as a party town, there is also a long list of family-oriented places to go and things to see. Either in the city or just nearby are movies and bonfires on the beaches, playgrounds and parks, watersports and waterparks and a variety of opportunities for young and old together. The Jolly Trolley runs continuous trolley service offers between Dewey and neighboring Rehoboth through the summer and surrounding weeks, and charters are available year-round at [www.jolleytrolley.com](http://www.jolleytrolley.com).